Effect of Liberalisation Process on Prices of Essential Commodities

1175. SHRI SANJAY DALMIA: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the process of liberalisation has any relation with rise in the prices of essential commodities; and

(b) if so, the measures taken to counter the adverse effect of liberalisation on prices of essential commodities?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): (a) and (b) Out of 30 essential commodities, 24 are food items which include, cereals, pulses, edible oils, sugar, gur, milk, potato, onion, fish, atta, etc. The liberalisation process has had no direct impact on their prices. In fact in the case of some of the essential commodities which are in periodic short supply, namely, pulses, edible oils, sugar and skimmod milk powder, the policy of import liberalisation and lowering of tariffs has helped in moderating the price rise in these commodities.

Enlargement of Election Commission

1176. SHRI O.P. KOHLI: Will the Minister of LAW AND JUSTICE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are contemplating to further enlarge the three-member election Commission into a five-member body; and

(b) if so, the factors that impelled Government to examine such a proposal?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF LAW AND JUSTICE (SHRI RAMAKANT D. KHALAP): (a) No. Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

Propusal for Setting up an Expenditure Management and Refurms Commission

1177. SHRI RAHASBIHARI BARIK: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government had a proposal to set up an Expenditure Management and Reforms Commission;

(b) if so, the objective of setting up such Commission; and

(c) the steps taken in that dirction?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (P. CHIDAMBARAM): (a) to (c) The intention to set up an Expenditure Management and Reforms Commission has already been announced in the Budget speech. The objective of this was to obtain the considered advice of the Commission on expenditure management and control.

Allegations against the M.D. of Air India

1178. SHRI JOY NADUKKARA: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether his Ministry have received three complaints against the M.D. of Air India alleging that he is misusing the funds of Air India, and

(b) if so, what steps have been taken to ascertain correctness of those allegations?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI CM. IBRAHIM): (a) and (b) Certain complaints were received last year relating to excessive expenditure on foreign travel, distribution of gifts and release of complimentary passes for public relations purpose against the Managing Director of Air India Ltd. While no formal enquiries were conducted, the matter relating to release of complimentary passes has been examined by the Ministry and no *prima-facie* case of irregularity was noticed. Similarly, the complaint relating to excessive expenditure on foreign travel was inquired into by Chairman, Air India Ltd. and no irregularity was found.